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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [IZ](#) [KU](#)

SUBJECT: SENIOR GOI FIGURE REPORTS CHILLY IRAQ-KUWAIT
BILATERAL

Classified by Charge d'Affaires Patricia Butenis for reasons
1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) During an April 1 meeting, Dr. Tariq Najm Abdullah, Chief of Staff to Prime Minister Maliki, told the Charge that PM Maliki had held a chilly bilateral meeting with Sheikh Sabah, the Amir of Kuwait, on the margins of the Doha Arab League Summit. According to Dr. Tariq, the Kuwaitis linked all progress in developing their bilateral relations to resolving outstanding missing persons cases. He added that the message had been conveyed "in an unfriendly manner."

¶2. (C) Dr. Tariq thought the Kuwaitis were being unreasonable. "Imagine if the Germans and the U.S. had linked their relations to resolving all missing persons after WWI... If the issue is border demarcation, we can work for a solution, if the issue is debt, we can work on it, but it,s not within our power to resolve all missing persons cases." He added "We (Saddam's opponents) have many of our own missing. We can not find them all. "

¶3. (C) The Charge asked at what level the two governments have been working at this issue. Dr. Tariq responded that there had been talk of forming joint committees, but formation has been hindered by the Kuwaiti's hard line position on missing persons.

¶4. (C) The Charge asked if this issue was holding up the dispatch of an Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait. Dr. Tariq said no, that was a separate question. The Charge underlined that having an Iraqi in Kuwait City, who represented the Prime Minister and was there to engage the Kuwaitis, could be the key to reaching a workable understanding on this issue and advancing the broader bilateral agenda. Dr. Tariq grunted in apparent agreement.

¶5. (C) Comment: Both Dr. Tariq and PM Maliki are long time members of the Da'wa Party which had been a shadowy organization in vigorous opposition to the Saddam regime. Consequently, they perceive themselves as fellow victims of Saddam, rather than those who must atone for Saddam's crimes. At the same time, they have acknowledged the principle of GOI reparations to Kuwait. Of note, we have DRL-Bureau funded projects to excavate mass graves from the Saddam era and our project implementers are aware of the importance of the Kuwaiti missing. There is little forensics capability in Iraq now, however, and this is a capacity one of our project implementers is trying to develop in conjunction with the Health and Human Rights ministries. In the meantime, the ICRC is working with both the GOI and the GOK on the missing persons issue. End comment.

BUTENIS